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DISCUSSION.

CAN THERE BE A MORAL REALIZATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL SELF?

MR. DUFF'S observations on parts of the book "*Studies in Philosophical Criticism and Construction*," in the last number of this JOURNAL, seem to call for a brief reply.

A reviewer is of course entitled to condemn a book in any terms which he pleases to use ; and such mere expressions of "individual" opinion cannot be profitably discussed. I therefore pass by Mr. Duff's remarks concerning the "unsystematic thinking," "intellectual immaturity," and "crudity" which he finds in my "system." Still, I must say that nothing was further from my mind than construction of a "system." I do not believe that a system is possible for us yet ; but if we shall ever attain to that desirable ideal, it will not be by parading a few general formulæ as solutions of all the problems of life ; it will not be by the specialist's method of intensifying the isolation of different knowledges from one another ; it will be by an attempt to unify the different branches of knowledge by developing their unity out of themselves. I presume that Mr. Duff would admit that there is a sense in which it is true that we are not yet utterly identical with the Absolute,—we have yet some progress to make towards a complete expression of the Absolute ; and if so, the finite and partial are real in the beginning at least. In ethics and epistemology alike the unity has to be wrought out of the parts. That was why I "brought together isolated inquiries," doing, I dare say, little enough towards working out their unity. But if this defect were corrected, it would not be by narrowing the field surveyed.

Mr. Duff devotes nearly four pages to a criticism of the last two chapters, on the method and postulates of ethics. His criticism would have been more instructive if he had taken the trouble to make himself aware of the presuppositions with which the author approaches this inquiry, and if he had not spoken entirely from the point of view of his own presuppositions which the author rejects. The criticism turns on the meaning of individuality, and the issue seems fairly expressed in the question placed at the head of this note. I have no quarrel with Mr. Duff's statement of the principle

of Idealism, that the finite self is "essentially and distinctively a sharer in and partaker of an infinite and eternal life." This principle is expressed or implied from the first page of the book to the last. But I hold, and have defended, the view that there can be no "logical evolution" of the idealistic principle, no "appreciation of its significance," unless it is read in the light of the conception which Mr. Bradley has done so much to enforce,—Degrees of Truth and Reality. Apart from this conception, the principle of Idealism cannot be made intelligible, for when you have grasped the social side you have lost the individual, and when you have grasped the divine side you have lost the human; and the converse. Such mere phrases as that the individual is essentially social, the human essentially divine, serve only for a superficial concealment of this dilemma. I may have stumbled in trying to work out the doctrine of degrees,—there is difficulty enough in working it out; but for me it is the vital factor in the doctrine of Idealism; and I tried to bring it to bear on the closely connected problems of the individual's relation to the social whole and to the Absolute. To criticise an author's views while you suppress or ignore his main contentions is a species of misrepresentation which is, to say the least of it, curious.

It seemed possible, if we grant that the doctrine of degrees is valid, to hold that the individual self has a certain independence, that is, a *real* life of its own which not even God can live for it; and at the same time to hold that the self "is not something *in se ipso totus teres atque rotundus*, but is conscious of itself as imperfect, finite, and dependent, and, therefore, of itself as ruled by an Ideal of infinite and absolute worth:" an Ideal which is partially realized in the historical achievements of the human spirit and wholly realized in the Absolute. Mr. Duff quotes this passage, but evidently supposes that by ascribing to the individual life a certain independence I must mean that it is a selfish life unrelated to everything human or divine,—the "particular individual self" which "cannot pass the outer court of ethics" (see especially p. 99). This conception is attacked and rejected in the book on ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical grounds.

The critic asks what ethical content self-realization can have when the self is individual. To answer this, as I showed in the chapter on the Method of Ethics, we observe the actual constitution of individuality, or personality, which is the same thing. We find what Mr. Bradley calls its "main tendencies," and the conditions

of their realization. We find that as individuals work out these tendencies together, they work out a kingdom of humanity which may be truly called "a spiritual life penetrating its members," but which is not identical with the actual organization of society. The awful examples which Mr. Duff quotes on p. 99 still seem to me to be obvious truths. Further, in the chapter on the Postulates of Idealist Ethics I tried to bring out the deeper aspects of these "main tendencies" in the individual life, when their Ideal is found to be the presence of the Absolute in us and to us. But an indispensable factor in this idealistic view is that the finite and growing self, the individual, must have a reality of its own; while at the same time it is vitally related to the deeper reality which is the Absolute. Whatever difficulty there may be in holding both of these to be true, it is not solved by calling one of them by the name of the other, by saying that the individual self is essentially social, or the human essentially divine. When the meaning of the terms is scrutinized, such phrases are seen to be only verbal propositions, carrying us no further than we were before.

I did not express or imply any "transition from man and his individual good to man as social," nor change a finite self into "a self which is essentially and distinctively a sharer in a universal life," if individual means *isolated* and finite means *merely finite*. The ideal of personality was affirmed to be an ideal and a realization of the essentially individual life, because experience shows that the realization of the ideal involves the intensification of *individuality*, along with the overcoming of *isolation or mere finiteness*.

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REPLY.

I SHOULD be sorry to have done Mr. Mellone any injustice; but the review of his book, which appeared in the last number, was not the result of any hasty perusal; nor do I think that the author's present defence of his position does anything to lessen the force of the objections to which his view seemed to me to be exposed. A careful reading of the author's reply discloses in my judgment the same defects of thought as I have already pointed out in the book itself. Further discussion of the question would therefore be of little service.

I would only add that I did not, as the author complains, overlook the principle of Degrees of Truth and Reality, apart from which